

Message Text

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ACTION DHA-02

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SHUM IR
SUBJ: HUMAN RIGHTS: EMPRESS DEFENDS IRAN

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. IRANIAN MEDIA GAVE PROMINENT PLAY MARCH 3 TO EMPRESS FARAH'S REMARKS TO CANADIAN TV REPORTER SALLY BASSETT DURING RECENT CBD INTERVIEW. IN ADDITION TO STANDARD INTERVIEW FARE ON HER ROLE, EMPRESS SPOKE OUT FIRMLY ON FOREIGN CRITICISM OF IRAN IN HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD. PRESS COVERAGE BEING POUCHED.

2. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON CRITICISM OF COUNTRY, EMPRESS SAID IRAN SHOULD HAVE REPLIED LONG AGO: "WE SAID TO OURSELVES THAT WE WERE BUSY WITH OUR DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRESS IN THE COUNTRY AND DID NOT WANT TO HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH WHAT THE FOREIGN PRESS SAID ABOUT US." FOREIGN PRESS CRITICISM OF IRAN SNOWBALLED OUT OF ALL PROPORTION AND IRAN SHOULD HAVE PROVIDED ANSWERS TO STOP THIS. EMPRESS SUGGESTED "WE DO NOT WANT ANYBODY TO INTERFERE IN OUR DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND THAT DOES NOT MAKE EVERYBODY HAPPY." THERE WERE COUNTRIES WHO SOUGHT CHANGE OF REGIME IN IRAN AND OTHERS WHO WERE UNHAPPY OVER IRANIAN OIL POLICY WHO CRITICIZED IRAN. HUMAN
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RIGHTS PROBLEMS WERE ATTACKED BECAUSE PROGRESS IN OTHER AREAS MEANT "THE ONLY THING THEY NOW HAVE AGAINST IRAN IS THE GOVERNMENT'S NO NONSENSE TREATMENT OF ANTI-IRANIAN ELEMENTS." EMPRESS NOTED IT WAS EASY TO FISH IN TROUBLED WATERS AND PERHAPS SOME PEOPLE WERE DOING IT OUT OF JEALOUSY.

3. ON QUESTION OF "ANTI-SECURITY PRISONERS", EMPRESS

REITERATED SHAH'S COMMENT THAT THERE WERE ONLY 3,000 BEING HELD FOR ACTIVITIES AGAINST THE SECURITY OF THE NATION. ". CRITICS DO NOT UNDERSTAND THAT THESE ELEMENTS WERE INVOLVED IN BOMBING AND KILLING. WHY SHOULD WE ALLOW THESE KILLERS TO GO FREE FOR POLITICAL REASONS AND KEEP OTHER KILLERS IN JAIL?" SHE ADDED THAT WESTERN PRESS REPORTS OF TORTURE AND DEATH IN IRANIAN PRISONS WERE PURE FABRICATIONS; THESE PEOPLE ARE ALIVE AND THEY ARE IN PRISON. EMPRESS NOTED NEWSMEN HAVE BEEN VISITING IRANIAN JAILS IN RECENT WEEKS, "BUT IF THEY WRITE PRO-IRANIAN ARTICLES, THEN THEY DO NOT GET PUBLISHED IN SOME NEWSPAPERS. THIS IS A GLOBAL PROBLEM."

4. REPLYING TO QUESTION ON DEMOCRACY IN IRAN, EMPRESS SAID VARIOUS COUNTRIES HAVE DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS. "WE HAVE STARTED POLITICAL EDUCATION FOR OUR PEOPLE TO MAKE THEM INVOLVED IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES, TEACH THEM HOW TO PARTICIPATE AND EXPLAIN WHAT DEMOCRACY IS. THIS TAKES TIME AND IS SOMETHING THE WESTERN PEOPLE DO NOT UNDERSTAND. EMPRESS STRESSED FREEDOM ALSO MEANS HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND HOUSING (AREAS WHERE EMPRESS HERSELF HAS TAKEN ACTIVE INTEREST IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS).

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5. COMMENT: THIS IS FIRST TIME EMPRESS HAS SPOKEN OUT ON THIS KIND OF SUBJECT WITH SUCH DEPTH AND CONVICTION. IT IS SIGNIFICANT INDICATOR THAT SHAH AND GOI MOVING TOWARD MORE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ACTIVE POSTURE IN COUNTERING FOREIGN CRITICISM. EMPRESS IS PERHAPS BEST LOVED MEMBER OF ROYAL FAMILY AND IS HIGHLY RESPECTED IN IRAN. HER WORDS ON SUBJECT AND DEMONSTRATED INTEREST IN THINGS WHICH BETTER PEOPLE'S LIVES AND HER SENSITIVITY TO PUBLIC MOODS. STATEMENT IS ALSO FURTHER EVIDENCE OF DEGREE TO WHICH EMPRESS HAS BECOME MORE ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS OVER PAST TWO YEARS. MIKLOS

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